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The atonement

THE ATONEMENT

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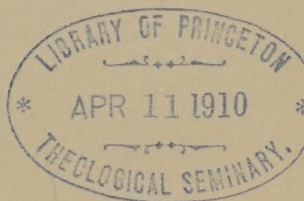
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THE ATONEMENT



✓ BY

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“ Lord of my heart, by Thy last cry,
Let not Thy blood on earth be spent—
Lo, at Thy feet I fainting lie,
Mine eyes upon Thy wounds are bent,
Upon Thy streaming wounds my weary eyes
Wait like the parchèd earth on April skies.

“ Wash me, and dry these bitter tears,
O let my heart no further roam,
'Tis Thine by vows, and hopes, and fears,
Long since—O call Thy wanderer home ;
To that dear home, safe in Thy wounded side,
Where only broken hearts their sin and shame may
hide.”

(KEBLE, *Christian Year*, “Good Friday.”)

INTRODUCTION

“ Ay, and when Prophecy her tale hath finished,
Knowledge hath withered from the trembling
tongue,
Love shall survive and Love be undiminished,
Love be imperishable, Love be young.”
(W. H. MYERS, *St. Paul.*)

I HAVE tried in the following pages to suggest some thoughts concerning the Atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ in the light of Personality.

It is often said that Butler's argument from analogy has been pressed too far, and that “ his book is taken as an argument to show that the difficulties of natural religion are not merely the same as those of nature, but the same as those of revelation ” (Figgis, *The Gospel and Human Needs*, p. 165). But I would respectfully urge that Butler's method of argument is still available for the defence of the Faith. His contention is not that the difficulties of natural and revealed religion are the same, but that they are similar, and that if we accept the difficulties of nature

we ought not to reject the system of revealed religion for the difficulties which it contains.

I have ventured to use this method of argument with regard to the Atonement, and I do not say more than this—that many of the difficulties which surround our faith in the Person of Christ have their parallel in the difficulties which belong to human personality, and that much that is called mysterious in our religion is not one whit more mysterious than the life and character of any living being in whom we have learned to put our trust, and whose influence has cast its spell over our mind and heart.

The need of forgiveness, the desire for expiation, the process of reconciliation, the instinct of sacrifice, the redemptive power of personality, are mysteries indeed, but they are mysteries which, apart from all theology or philosophy, are woven into the common experience of men ; they are not the theories of students and ecclesiastics, they are the simple facts of human life ; and if we reject the mysteries of Atonement and Grace, we are still confronted with the mysteries of human nature and personality, and these are, after all, the key and clue to those Divine Mysteries by which we live, and move, and have our being.

And the work of the Christian apologist is not so much an intellectual defence of the theory of Christianity as an attempt to prove to men that in the mysteries of Divine Personality there lie hid not only the grace and help for the storm and stress of life, the ideal of the heart's affection, the satisfaction of the soul's desire, the light that lighteth every man coming into the world, but also the echo of their own thoughts and aspirations, the reflection in the Divine sphere of the hope and fear, the love and pain, the joy and sorrow of the heart of man.

"The Gospel, with its story of Jesus, and the Church as the family of His Love, do but carry to its highest all that world of uplifting joy revealed to us through human love and society" (Figgis, *The Gospel and Human Needs*, p. 77).

And the gospel of Divine Forgiveness is the story of the human heart told in perfect accents by the lips of Him Who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven.

After all, the value and power of the Atonement is for those who have sinned; it is the need of weary lives for One Life on which they can rest, and to which they can look in darkness and in pain, that is satisfied, not by theories about the Cross, but by the Cross itself.

Argument will never convince the critic or the philosopher ; now, as of old, the “ preaching of the Cross is foolishness ” to all except the penitent who has sinned and the mourners who have sorrowed. Now, as of old, it is the weary and the heavy laden, the plain man who has to struggle against the wave of temptation, and knows that no fine-spun theories will help him, to whom the Atonement is the haven of his soul—the beacon light in the storm that besets his life.

The dilettante critic, the academic philosopher, the polished and refined sceptic, nay, even the thoughtful and religious student who pursues his way along the calm, sequestered vale of life, will always find it easy to doubt or to criticise the story of the Cross ; it is not possible to approach Christianity with an unbiassed mind, for a mind without prepossessions is not a mind at all, and the sick are the best judges of medicine, the hungry are the best critics of food. And Christ Himself has said that we must become as little children if we would enter into the kingdom. So they who have been forgiven need no proof of forgiveness, the soul that has learned the power of Christ has entered into the highest region of Christian evidence.

And the Cross must be lived to be realised, it must be tested by experience and proved by life. It is not a theory to be discussed, or an argument to be expounded ; it is a fact to be verified, a life to be known, a Person to be loved ; it is the force that makes for righteousness ; it is the silent witness seen in the patience of the saints and in the blood of the martyrs ; it is written in words that only they who have eyes to see can read, in the homes where its power is felt and its sweetness is known. Men will argue about Christ's atoning work from one generation to another, they will press into the controversy whole volumes of theology and of philosophy, and still the Christ of Calvary will seem far away, and we shall search in vain amidst the dust of theological strife for the Brow that is crowned with thorns, and the Face that is marred with sorrows ; but the humble and the penitent shall still find Him when Pilate and Herod have scorned Him, when speculative religion and political passion would rob Him of His glory, when the world still passes Him by—in the loneliness of His Gethsemane, in the silence of His love, in the stillness of His peace and power, when for all who hang beside Him on a Cross He gives His perfect absolution and opens the gates of Paradise,

So still from age to age the witness of the heart to Christ shall be the truest evidence of the power of His Cross. Love speaks where reason fails, for love holds the key to all mysteries and all knowledge, in the kingdom of our Father.

“Mystery is, in fact, no less needful than miracle in our world of thought to-day.”

(FIGGIS, *The Gospel and Human Needs*.)

“A thoroughly comprehensible personality would have no attraction for us.”

(TYRRELL, *Lex Orandi*.)

“What is mystery but the horizon that bounds the knowledge of a finite being, the shadow of ignorance that falls wherever comes the light of knowledge? . . . He who says ‘Where mystery begins religion ends’ knows neither what mystery is, nor yet what religion is.”

(ARCHBISHOP MAGEE, *Christ the Light of All Scripture*, p. 38.)

CHAPTER I

THE ATONEMENT AND MYSTERY

IN wise and weighty words—alas! too little read in this generation—Bishop Butler tells us that the mysteries of grace have their counterpart in the world of nature; and that, if there is much that perplexes and disturbs us in the region of religion, there is much that is hard to understand and equally mysterious in common life.

“The design,” he says, “of the following Treatise will be to show that the several parts principally objected against in this moral and Christian dispensation *are analogous to what is experienced in the constitution and course of nature, or Providence*; that the chief objections themselves which are alleged against the former are no other than what may be alleged with like justness against the latter, when they are found in fact to be inconclusive; and that this argument from analogy is *in general unanswerable, and undoubtedly of weight on the side of religion.*”

And, without question, it is a source of comfort, when the mystery of the soul thickens and deepens, to look round upon the natural world which we accept as part of our existence without doubt or dispute, and realise that mystery is woven into the whole texture of life; that the air we breathe, the flowers that grow, the stream that trickles at our feet, and the sun that fills the heavens with its splendour are all mysteries, before which science stands with bowed head and folded hands in the temple of knowledge—a fact to which the Church in the Eucharist bears witness by describing the inner secrets of heart and life as “these holy mysteries.”

“Flower in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies,
I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
Little flower—but *if* I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is.”
(Tennyson.)

So the poet takes up the thought of the theologian and reminds us that Nature, too, has her secrets—things which she hides from the wise and prudent and reveals unto babes.

To quarrel, therefore, with religion on account of its mystery is as illogical as to complain of the sun because we cannot trace his course, or the wind because we know not whence it cometh or whither it goeth. Mystery is the law of life ; and we cannot escape it.

And of all mysteries, the deepest, the greatest, and the most profound mystery is personality—the conscious self, which is never absent from our waking thoughts, and even in our dreams asserts itself with strange and unaccountable power. Round it circle for ever the three questions which man is constantly asking : “ Whence am I ? What am I ? Whither am I going ? ”

Its identity is the same amidst infinite variety and unceasing change. I am I, alike in childhood and in age, in health and sickness, in prosperity and in adversity ; from the beginning to the end of life we are conscious of our personal identity amidst all else that changes or decays.

The truth of the old simile of the life of man that comes like the sparrow into the lighted hall and passes out again into the darkness is true of our personality ; and its mystery weighs still upon the heart and mind of men.

Human personality, so strange, so complex,

so full of noble impulses and base ideas, so bewildering in its changeful moods, in its heights and in its depths, its splendid flash-light views of other worlds and other spheres than these, and in its dark and dreadful aspects, when it seems to sink below the level of the beasts that perish in strange and unexpected ways. Is there a mystery that has yet baffled the mind, that equals in its depth and height, in its unsearchable fulness and in its infinite complexity, the mystery of all mysteries, the personality of man ?

And yet we accept it sometimes with pathetic patience as the supreme fact of our life—nay, we even claim that it is rational ; we are for ever insisting that man is a reasonable being, that above all creatures he and he alone has a rational existence ; we accept his personality as a fact, and though it bewilders us with its complex nature, and with its mysteries before and after, we are content to wait for further knowledge, and we acquiesce in a mystery which we cannot explain.

Is it not wise to realise that the difficulties which surround the Christian religion are just the difficulties which meet us in the sphere of human personality, and that much of the anxiety that men sometimes feel concerning

the truth and reasonableness of faith would be removed if they would pause to remember that in the human self there lies a reflection of the Divine Image; and that in this conscious personality which is ever with us there may be much that will help us concerning those Divine Persons Whose existence Revelation declares to us, and of Whom it is written that we shall be satisfied when we awake with Their likeness ?

And it will be the object of this book to endeavour to show that for one at least of the mysteries of the Christian Faith, the Atonement of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, there will be found in the nature and character of personality some gleam of light upon a mystery of faith which, when it has satisfied the heart, has sometimes failed to appease the impatient demands of reason and of conscience.

“Christianity is to be considered as containing an account of a dispensation of things, not at all discoverable by reason, in consequence of which several distinct precepts are enjoined us. . . . Revelation is to be considered as informing us of somewhat new, in the state of mankind, and in the government of the world, as acquainting us with some relations we stand in, which could not otherwise have been known. . . . If therefore Christ be indeed the mediator between God and man, *i.e.* if Christianity be true ; if He be indeed our Lord, our Saviour, and our God ; no one can say what may follow, not only the obstinate, but the careless disregard to Him in those high relations.”

(BUTLER'S *Analogy*, Part II., chap. i.)

“God revealed in Christ is the one truth, which gives to tired men and women the right—the one right to be as little children, with the child's freshness of delight and trust.

“We have to make up our mind, as between some form of ‘cosmic emotion’ and the sublime madness of the faith which will worship a babe, a carpenter, and a criminal.”

(FIGGIS, *The Gospel and Human Needs*, pp. 26, 86.)

CHAPTER II

CHRISTIANITY A REVELATION OF PERSONS

THE Catholic Faith is not a bundle of precepts cast loose upon the world, it is not even a code of morality ; it is primarily a revelation of persons.

It is not good advice, but good news. To the shepherds who kept watch over their flocks by night there came no revised version of the Ten Commandments, re-edited in the light of fuller knowledge and issued to meet the wider needs of an enlightened age ; nor did they receive an abridged and abbreviated edition of the Mosaic Code—morality tinged with emotion—a spiritual and highly cultured reprint of the message of the prophets ; but they were informed concerning facts which it was greatly to their advantage to know. It was news that was brought to them—a Gospel, in fact, and not an exhortation. “Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.” Christianity is a

belief in a Person ; and its authority is personal.

The religion of Mohammed is founded upon a book.

The message of the founder of Buddhism repudiates the idea of personal relationship with himself as the source of life and light. " Be ye lamps unto yourselves," is the Gospel of Buddhism.

It is Christ alone Who has said, " I am the Light of the world." He alone has made the supreme personal claim that men shall accept Him as the eternal fountain of life. " He that hath the Son of God hath life, he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."

The laws of the old dispensation still remain for the guidance and help of men, but their authority is personal, and they are raised for ever out of the formal atmosphere of law into the sphere of love. " Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, but I say unto you."

The Sermon on the Mount, which sceptics acknowledge to be the noblest morality that the world has ever heard, is charged with dogma, it is based upon the supreme claim of Christ to be the sole arbiter of the conscience of men and the final Judge of the world.

And Christian conduct has therefore for its authority and its inspiration a living Person.

St. Paul does not commend morality to the Church of Corinth for the sake of health or social prosperity, nor does he urge it on views of prudence and economy in sexual relationship. The lesson of morality is not a mere caution delivered in the school of medicine to the students of science ; it is a revelation of the sanctity of the body ; it is to be henceforth the issue not of the Mosaic Code, but of the Incarnation. 'The body is the temple of the Holy Ghost. Sin shall not reign in it, because it is redeemed by the blood of Christ ; the taint of lust shall not touch it, because it is the dwelling of the Spirit of God.

And the flight of the soul as it ascends higher and yet higher into the clear heaven of light and truth is proclaimed through history by the songs of faith and love, the devotion of the saints who find in Christ the well of eternal gladness, the fountain of joy and peace in life and death. "To me to live is Christ, to die is gain." "Pro Christo et ecclesiæ" is the war-cry of the martyrs as they face with unflinching courage the flame and the sword, the lions of the arena, or the legions of evil. "Jesus only" has been the motto alike of the monk

in his cell and the simple toiler in the cities ; in all ages it is a personal love that has inspired the devotion of the Christian Church. " They looked unto Him and their faces were lightened," for whom had they in the world but He ? and there were none on earth that they desired in comparison of Him.

Thus the mysteries of the Faith have just those characteristics which we should expect to find in personal religion.

It is confidently assumed that the knowledge of a person is easily acquired, whereas the science of personality is the most difficult form of knowledge in the world. Do we really know our friends ? Are there not in our dearest and our best, heights that lie beyond our vision and depths that we cannot fathom ? Is it not true that often when we think that we really understand them they exhibit new aspects of character and perplex us in strange and unexpected ways ?

Personality is the mystery of our existence. And yet we are impatient of the mystery that surrounds Divine Persons, we complain often and bitterly that God hides His plans, alas ! that He often hides His Face. And we make haste to condemn the mysteries of the Faith as irrational, forgetting that that is often most rational which

we are least able to defend by our limited power of logic and of mind.

The love of a mother for her child cannot be proved by reasoning in a court of law, but it is none the less most reasonable. The difference between reason and reasoning has not yet been fully understood by us, and yet it explains both the reasonableness of the Christian Faith and our present inability to reason concerning it. It is not irrational, therefore, to say that the mysteries of faith are for the faithful, that there are secrets which God whispers in the ear of His children, things hidden from the wise and prudent and revealed unto babes,

“ Thoughts hardly to be pressed
Into a narrow act ”

(Browning),

secret intimations of immortality, tender tokens of love, silent and yet powerful, weighty yet unexpressed, which He gives to us in still and quiet moments, “ walking softly in life’s noon-day, in the garden of the soul.”

It is not unreasonable to conclude that if a Divine and Eternal Father stands around our path and about our bed, “ spying out all our ways,” there will be truths that only the

heart that loves Him can understand, thoughts which it needs the intimacy of a beloved disciple to comprehend, things which belong to our peace, but which He cannot yet tell us as they shall one day be told because they can only be revealed to the soul that has learned to know and love the Presence of its Redeemer.

The doctrines, therefore, of Christianity, so far from being merely the puzzles of theologians or the fine-spun webs of mysticism that priestcraft has woven round the simple outlines of faith, are really the earnest attempt of the Church to express the facts of Divine life and to put into human language her faith in the Person of our Lord. Love demands definition, and the heart will not rest content with a vague and shadowy outline of the character of its beloved.

To acquiesce in loose and inadequate expressions of doctrine is not to exhibit a high and lofty spirit; it is merely to be careless concerning the things that need most care, it is to be indifferent when we ought to be anxious, unmindful of things which love bids us cherish and heedless of details upon which the tender and true-hearted spirit loves to dwell with ever-increasing fondness. But frankly to recognise that love has a language

of its own is to realise that the mysteries of God are the mysteries of human personality in the Divine sphere, and that there must be at least in this world much that is most rational and yet lies beyond our vision in the life and character of Him Whom, not having seen, we love. And this is pre-eminently true of the subject of our consideration in this volume.

“ Only a person can know a person, and the knowledge of a person can never be a knowledge merely intellectual.”

(MOBERLY, *Problems and Principles*, 40.)

“ The whole analogy of nature shows that there may be infinite reasons for things with which we are not acquainted.”

(BUTLER'S *Analogy*, Part II., chap. i.)

CHAPTER III

THE ATONEMENT AND CONSCIENCE AND REASON

THE Atonement of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ has suffered more than any other doctrine from misrepresentation and calumny, just because in all the discussions and contradictions that have centred round it, men have forgotten that they were not considering a legal transaction in a court of law, but a personal action in the region of love.

Indignant protests have been made against the injustice of the vicarious sacrifice of Christ upon the Cross. It is monstrous, so we are told, to be expected to believe in a God Who will accept the life of an innocent and stainless victim, instead of sinners who deserve the due reward of their deeds; and a God Who will be appeased by such a sacrifice as this, is not a God Whom conscience and reason can accept. "If we are to go to hell for

refusing to believe in Him, then to hell we will go."

We must not pause here to consider the travesty of the Atonement against which the protest is directed. We shall endeavour later to show that the popular theory of Atonement differs as widely from the Catholic doctrine as night from day, but we would ask those who reject any theory of vicarious sacrifice whether in human life there is not constant and ceaseless sacrifice, if the innocent are not always bearing the punishment of the guilty, and further, if human love can exist without suffering? Is not life built upon a plan by which pain and love are woven together, so that we can confidently assert that if pain were to be banished from the world, love would follow in its train?

It may be unjust, it may be contrary alike to reason and to conscience, but the whole of human history is one long record of innocent love bearing the penalty of sin; the just do suffer for the unjust, and love delights to have it so.

Is there a mother whose grey hairs are stricken to the grave for the shame of her son who does not bear the burden of his sins as he never can hope to bear it until he sees life as

she sees it always, and in the agony of his repentance comes to himself? Nay, is there not in the intensity of our love for another a pain which belongs to its essence and life? Is true love possible without sacrifice? Can one heart enter into the life of another at all without suffering? The joy of united love is in proportion to its pain, and the heart that has never learnt to forget itself has escaped alike the greatest joy and the greatest suffering that men can ever know.

Perfect love, therefore, involves infinite suffering; that God can love and cannot suffer is impossible, that a heart which takes the whole world in should be untouched by its grief and unmoved by its pain would be a mystery greater than all the mysteries of theology.

A Christ who did not suffer, aye, who did not suffer even unto death, might be the hero of a dream-legend or the demi-god of an ancient world, but he would not be the Christ of Gethsemane and Calvary, the Christ Who wept over Jerusalem and poured out His heart in love at the grave of Lazarus, the Christ of our soul's darkest hours and deepest moments, the Christ Who is called the Man of Sorrows because He has borne the sorrow of the world. Above all, is it conceivable if we in our im-

perfect love would bear the burden and pain of other lives, that Christ would do less? If the love of the human heart would do all that it can, will He, the Creator, be less loving than His creatures?

“ Would I suffer for him that I love? So
wouldst thou—so wilt thou!
So shall crown thee the topmost, ineffablest,
uttermost crown—
And thy love fill infinitude wholly, nor leave
up nor down
One spot for the creature to stand in! . . .
O Saul, it shall be
A Face like my face that receives thee; a
Man like to me,
Thou shalt love and be loved by, for ever:
a Hand like this hand
Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee!
See the Christ stand! ”

(Browning.)

The whole analogy of human life, the bearing of its silent sorrows, the history of its daily crucifixions, leads us to the sorrow and the love of the Sacred Heart.

The suffering of the Atonement may not be just, but it has its copy in every heart that is

worthy of the name ; it is Divine because it is human, it is human because it is Divine.

But, we may proceed to inquire, is it wholly unjust ? What do we mean by justice ? And here again it is by the analogy of human personality alone that we shall arrive at a solution of this question.

For if by justice we mean the process that goes by that name in a court of law, then assuredly there is no justice, either in this world or in the world to come.

The end of true justice is to give to every man his due. This cannot be the justice, so called, of the law court, for there is no judge on earth who would dare to make the punishment fit the crime, and exact from the offender a complete and substantial equivalent for the wrong which he has inflicted upon his fellow-man. For true justice requires that the offender shall realise the wrong that he has done, that he shall see with the eye of the man whom he has injured, and that he shall understand how great and how deep is the injury that he has wrought. Justice presupposes love, it demands sympathy, it involves, in a word, the reformation of the offender. Perfect justice is, in fact, impossible without perfect sympathy.

“ Put yourself in his place ” is the demand which conscience makes in the court of human justice, and it is a demand which only love can bear and only love can hope to fulfil. Justice is not done when the mother’s heart is broken for the sin of her son, it is not even begun ; but when her son flings himself upon her grave, and cries, in an agony of remorse, “ Would God I had died for thee,” then the work of reparation has commenced, and the awakened soul begins to suffer all that it ought to have suffered before, and he begins to climb the steep ascent of heaven wearing for the first time the crown of thorns which she has worn for him, and bearing the burden which throughout the years she has carried in the depth of her love and in the anguish of her heart that at last he may carry it for himself.

And now, as we proceed to read the mystery of the Atonement in the light of the mystery of human sorrow we shall begin to understand that the end and aim of the Atonement of Christ was not to die instead of us, but on behalf of us, that we too might pay in Him the penalty of our sin, and learn in union with Him to bear the chastisement of our peace.

" Sin is indeed the centre of the controversy : Christianity appeals, and professedly appeals, to those only who are full of it.

" It is useless to talk to the drunkard or the harlot, to the man enslaved either by passion or greed, of the upward progress of the race and the gradual amelioration of life—useless, even if it were true to the facts, which it is not. Either he will not listen, or if he is in a mood to listen—in other words, under conviction of sin—it is redemption, atonement, miraculous grace, that he cries for, and repudiates the abstractions of idealism as the stone offered for bread."

(FIGGIS, *Gospel and Human Needs*, pp. 97, 169.)

CHAPTER IV

SIN

It was Mr. Gladstone who said that the great need of his generation was a sense of sin. And the view which the ordinary man adopts towards the great Christian doctrines of Atonement and Grace must be inevitably coloured by his sense of sin. Before we consider, therefore, the question of Forgiveness, and the doctrines of Pardon and Grace, we must realise that there is something to forgive, that the need of Redemption is not a theory, but a fact with which every student of life must reckon if he would seek to reform the world wisely and well.

For if sin is merely a defect in education, or the result of heredity for which there is no cure, then Atonement is either unnecessary or useless. And in fact, the most outspoken rationalists frankly acknowledge that logically there is a large tract of human nature that lies beyond cultivation.

The gospel of "morality tinged with

emotion " is for the elect, and not for the multitude. Give up the Christian doctrine of sin, and with it the gospel of the Atonement, and you surrender all hope for the vast mass of mankind for whom the gospel of culture and education is as useful as the lecture of a Professor of Hebrew or the science of comparative anatomy. It is at least helpful to us Christians to realise what is left, if we cease to regard sin as an act of rebellion against an all-loving and an all-righteous Person, and so come to regard the need of a Mediator and the gospel of atoning grace as the myths of an unenlightened age—the superstition of an era of bigotry and credulity which modern knowledge has outgrown.¹

Mr. Cotter Morison, in his *Service of Man*, frankly tells us that " a man with a criminal nature and education, under given circumstances of temptation, can no more help committing crime than he could help having a headache under certain conditions of brain and stomach." " Nothing is more certain than that no one makes his own character. That is done for him by his parents and ancestors. The strong nature, the vivid imagination, the tender

¹ See Appendix A, " The Christian Consciousness and Sense of Sin," pp. 97 ff.

conscience, the firm will, all come by inheritance, as much as money in the funds, or a noble demesne of broad acres." This is at least frank, and Mr. Cotter Morison accepts the logical consequences of his theories. If sin is an invention of theologians, if we are simply the victims of a past for which we are not responsible, or if we are merely suffering from a need of education, which a polytechnic institute or a county council can supply, then clearly the multitude is not responsible for its deeds, and those who are beyond the beneficent help of educational institutions must remain as they are. And Mr. Cotter Morison boldly faces the issue. "It will perhaps," he adds, "be said that this view does away with moral responsibility; that those who hold it cannot consistently blame any crime or resent any injury; that we should not on this hypothesis reproach a garrotter who half murders us—he is a machine, not a man with free will, capable of doing and forbearing according to the moral law. It is no more rational to blame him than it would be to blame a runaway locomotive which knocks you down, and mangles or kills you. To which the answer is, that the sooner the idea of moral responsibility is

got rid of, the better it will be for society and moral education. The sooner it is perceived that bad men will be bad, do what we will—though, of course, they may be made less bad—the sooner shall we come to the conclusion *that the welfare of society demands the suppression or elimination of bad men, and the careful cultivation of the good only. . . .*

“*Nothing is gained by disguising the fact that there is no remedy for a bad heart, and no substitute for a good one. . . .* We may preach morality as we choose, but we shall only be successful with the apt scholars.”

“*Exalted piety,*” he says in another chapter, “*is as unattainable to the common herd as exalted poetry.*”

We are grateful to Mr. Cotter Morison, for now at least we know where we are. Strip the new theology of its fine phrases and its lofty rhetoric, and you have the gospel of despair in all its naked and hideous reality which Mr. Cotter Morison, more honest or more clear-sighted than his successors in the school of rationalism, has proclaimed. The Christian doctrine of sin may be a superstition, it may be too childish and unreasonable for an age that is permeated with Cowper-Templeism and City Templeism; but at least it is good to

realise the alternative, to understand clearly what the issue is if we surrender for ever the doctrine of Redemption, the gospel of hope for *all* mankind ; and the faith in a living Mediator Who claims to save to the uttermost not the "*apt scholars*" who need no repentance, but the "common herd" "to whom," we understand, "exalted piety is as unattainable as exalted poetry."

It is good indeed to have the issue so clearly stated, for modern religious writers are tainted with the spirit of the new theology, and Christian scientists are busily employed in trying to persuade the world that sin and the need of atonement are the chimeras of theology. "The old dogmatic erred," we are told, "in laying the great stress of its preaching upon the fact of sin."

"The higher man of to-day," says Sir Oliver Lodge, "is not worrying about his sins at all, still less about their punishment ; his mission, if he is to be good for anything, is to be up and doing."

"The sense of sin," says another, "is an attitude becoming increasingly unreal to most serious men." ¹

¹ Quoted in Figgis, *Gospel and Human Needs*, chap. iv.

Be it so. If this is the truth, let us know it; but let us face also the alternative, let us realise whither the new gospel is leading us, let us acknowledge frankly that the alternative leaves the mass of ordinary men untaught and unhelped, that the daily toilers in slum and city, to say nothing of the publican and the harlot, are left without hope of redemption. For they are not the apt scholars of Mr. Cotter Morison's dream of cultivation, they belong to "the common herd," and "you must have a very fine and peculiar organisation to be a true Christian" (*Service of Man*, p. 88).

Meanwhile, before we surrender our faith to the highest bidder and give up a gospel which has in fact saved and is saving some of "this common herd," it would be well to ask the preachers of the new theology to test their gospel by the experience of life, and when they have saved the publican and the harlot, when they have brought peace to the penitent and hope to the fallen and comfort to the mourner by the culture which only the "apt scholars" can understand, and by the "exalted piety" which is "unattainable" to the majority of men, it will be time enough for us to give up our gospel in exchange for theirs. For the present we prefer to cling to our faith in the power

of a living Person Who makes no distinction between apt scholars and the common herd, Who has saved alike the Magdalen from her shame and the citizen of Tarsus from his pride, and Who has said, not to the cultured philosopher or the dilettante critic, but to the humble and ignorant masses of the world, "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

“Forgiveness is not a transaction which can be taken by itself and stated as it were in terms of arithmetic. It is an attitude of a person to a person. It can only be understood in terms of personality.”

(MOBERLY, *Atonement and Personality*, p. 54.)

CHAPTER V

FORGIVENESS—THE DIFFICULTY OF FORGIVENESS

Now, if we pursue our inquiry in the light of all that we know of human personality, we shall discover that much that has been said concerning the Atonement is due to complete misunderstanding of the meaning and nature of all atonement.

Why, it is asked, was it necessary for God to take so much trouble? Could not Divine forgiveness have been pronounced by one eternal word, and the sin of the world blotted out in one stroke of Divine love and mercy? Was not the Incarnation a complicated and unnecessary method of restoring fallen man to the favour of God?

That is the language of the man in the street concerning the mystery of Redemption; but it finds an echo in many hearts. It would be well, therefore, to consider the difficulty of forgiveness and its real nature and meaning.

(I) And first, the difficulty of forgiveness.

And we may well ask those who speak thus lightly of forgiveness, whether after all it is quite such an easy thing as it is commonly supposed to be? It is urged that to say of God that He will not forgive without the mediation and death of Christ is to represent Him as less merciful and less compassionate than we expect an ordinarily good man to be.

But are we quite sure that ordinarily good men can forgive with ease? Nay, is it even just that they should forgive easily? "Death is not enough!" was the cry of the spectators in court when the maimed hands of a little child were held up, the foul act of a robber who had cut them off at the wrists to steal the bracelets. And "death is not enough" is the verdict of the human conscience against the wrongs done everywhere by murderers and traitors. Nay, did not our Lord Himself say of those who caused one of His little ones to stumble, that it would be better for him that a millstone were hanged round his neck and he were drowned in the depths of the sea?

Is it just that we should forgive without amendment or reparation the evil deeds of men? And if in the court of human judgment the voice of conscience cries out for expiation, will the most just Judge be silent in the Court

of Heaven concerning the injuries that men have wrought against His children? If the earthly father's heart is torn with anger against the murderer of his child, will God be less wrathful against those who have laid burdens grievous to be borne upon the children whom He loves?

When we confidently proclaim the ease of Divine forgiveness, we forget that the wrath of God against impenitent sinners finds its deepest echo in the heart of man, and that the desire for expiation is deep rooted in the instinct of the soul.

The fact is that pardon is not easy, that unconditional forgiveness must be the greatest injustice, and so far from being the mercy of an all-loving Creator, it would be the indifference of a self-indulgent father who cares neither for the welfare of his children nor for the claims of righteousness and truth. And this desire for expiation exists in each awakened soul. The heart that is truly ashamed of sin is not content with forgiveness made easy. It cannot rest until it has done all that is possible to atone for sin. It refuses to offer to the Lord that which has cost nothing. A pardon purchased by a shibboleth, gasped *in articulo mortis* by a dying man, is abhorrent to the soul that longs

to prove its love and respond to Divine tenderness by a life of faith and duty.

And thus have the saints and martyrs considered the death at Calvary. "I count not myself to have apprehended, but I press toward the mark," is the cry of the hero of a hundred battles in the warfare of Christ.

And the lives of penitents in every age echo with the same cry. The doctrine of the Fatherhood of God has been recovered for us by the teaching of Frederick Denison Maurice, and Christian charity has rightly recoiled from the gloom and horror of Calvinism; but we may well consider whether in these days forgiveness is not made too easy, whether we have not cheapened the gift of God until men have come to regard sin as at best an error of judgment which time and knowledge and a little sentimental piety would correct. And in certain phases of popular religious revivals, language is used concerning the sins of believers which is positively blasphemous. "He is a believer" was all that a woman in a Welsh parish had to say of her husband whom a visitor found dead drunk upon the floor. But the heart that God has touched scorns the offer of forgiveness on easy terms. "Make me as one of thy hired servants; give me the lowest place in the house-

hold ; set me to do the meanest work in the Kingdom."

"Then life shall be Thy service, Lord,
And death the gate of heaven."

The desire for expiation is the witness of the soul to the fact that forgiveness is not an easy transaction: the fiat of a ruler who can sit at ease upon the heights careless of the welfare of the world ; but a miracle of love, wrought in blood and tears by One Who stooped to the shame of the Cross that He might fill us with the love of the Crucified.

And here, too, human relationship bears witness to the truth of Divine requirement.

Contrition, Confession, and Amendment are not the postulates of theology alone ; they lie at the root of all human forgiveness. Love has its little unremembered acts, its deeds of devotion, its silent ministries, its lifelong martyrdoms, which, if we trace them to their source, will be found to be done in sorrow for the past, and offered upon the altar of many a beautiful and quiet life of which the world is not worthy.

The record of expiations is written in a book that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, but it shall be seen and heard in that day when the

story of earth and its struggles and victories shall bear its witness to the truth of Divine mysteries of Redemption and Sacrifice which are hidden from the wise and prudent and have been revealed unto babes.

(2) But, secondly, while popular imagination and a vague and unworthy sense of sin have obscured the great aspects of justice and righteousness, popular ignorance has hidden the true meaning of forgiveness.

For pardon is not a mere transaction, it is a process of reconciliation ; man's forgiveness of his fellow-men is not an imperial ukase, it is a change of mind, it is a conversion of heart by which the offender and offended are reunited in the bonds of friendship and of love. The process is incomplete until the forgiveness has been bestowed. If it takes two to make a bargain, it certainly takes two to effect a reconciliation ; and if forgiveness is to become effective, it must be accepted. We may forgive our friend, but we are not reconciled until he gladly and willingly accepts our love.

And is it not just this difficulty that has caused us to despair ? Is there any man who has tried to teach reform to those who hate to be reformed, is there any saint or missionary who has loved his fellow-man with all the passion

of his soul, but who could not persuade them that his heart was true and his motives pure, who has not entered in spirit into the mind of Him Who came to His own, and of Whom it is written that His own received Him not, Who wept over the city that He died to redeem, and groaned in spirit at the grave of His friend, for the unwillingness of a world that would not be redeemed ?

The difficulty surely of reconciliation is not one that theologians have invented and priests have proclaimed to bind or loose upon the neck of the disciple, it is the common experience of every saviour of mankind, of the prophet of reform, and of the priests of love and duty who in each age have stooped to die for those who in their rage and folly have nailed them to a cross. Forgiveness, therefore—the reconciliation of man to God—is a process that only love and peace can accomplish in the heart and life of men.

It presupposes conditions which cannot be fulfilled until man has realised the shame of sin and acknowledged it in fear and love.

“ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

And here lies the difficulty. How is this to be accomplished ?

“The sinner confused with sin, which dims and paralyses every personal power, cannot see or feel sin as it is. . . . Even so far as he does understand, and is trying to hate, his very hatred for his sin is qualified by a liking which is still within himself.”

(MOBERLY, *Atonement and Personality*, pp. 127-8.)

“If you have learned what sin is, if you want sin detected, pardoned, removed, killed down to its very roots, I know, and the world can give you, no other Name.”

(ARCHBISHOP ALEXANDER, *Verbum Crucis*, p. 16.)

CHAPTER VI

CHRIST OUR MEDIATOR

WE pass to the consideration of Christ's work for us, and in us, in the Atonement wrought upon the Cross.

If God cannot forgive without atonement, then clearly atonement must be made. But who was to make it? Man was "very far gone from original righteousness." He had lost the vision of holiness, and the quest is for the pure in heart. "We needs must love the highest when we see it." But the pattern of righteousness could no more be seen. The revelation had been lost. "As," says St. Athanasius, "when the likeness painted on a panel has been effaced by stains from without, he whose likeness it is must needs come once more to enable the portrait to be renewed on the same work . . . in the same way also the most holy Son of the Father, being in the Image of the Father, came to our region to renew man once more in His Likeness" (St. Athanasius, *de Incarnatione*). The dust of sin had overlaid the picture. Man

could not acknowledge his guilt till he had once more seen the vision of righteousness.

Further, he could not in his sinful nature make atonement for his sin. Perfect humanity could alone atone for the sins of the whole world, for the aim of reconciliation was the union of man with God. It could only be wrought by one who knew perfection; it is the master of the art who alone can reproduce the picture, so only the Son of God could reveal before God and man the life of perfect righteousness. He alone could represent God to man, and man to God, and therefore Christ suffered, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. A mediator there must have been, and the one Mediator has stooped to reveal the Father to the world and bring the world to the Father.

That was Christ's work for us. He is our Representative, our Ambassador in the Court of Heaven. Very God and yet very Man; He can reveal Godhead, and save humanity. He can come forth from the bosom of the Father to redeem the world. He can leave the world and go to the Father as the Perfect Man, the Sinless Representative of the whole human race.

But if this were all; if, as certain gross and popular misconceptions of Atonement affirm, Christ's Sacrifice is wrought apart from us, and

we are simply to rely upon His finished work, if the Just suffered *instead of* the unjust, and a mere conventional acceptance of the fact is sufficient for salvation; then indeed the Atonement—thus regarded—is the most unjust and immoral transaction that the world has ever seen.

But if Christ's work for us is incomplete apart from His work in us, then we can easily understand that we do not escape the just punishment for our sins, that in Him we learn to bear the penalty, to acknowledge the guilt, and to suffer as they alone do suffer who realise that the anguish of Love lies at their door, and that it is with His stripes they are healed.

Union, not substitution, is the keynote of the Christian doctrine of Atonement.

Christ reconciles us to God, by enabling us in Him to offer to God a sacrifice for sin and also an ensample of godly life. And without doubt, that is the argument of St. Paul's Epistles, and the basis of all teaching in the New Testament concerning Redemption and Forgiveness. "We shall be saved in His life." "He made Him to be sin for us Who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God *in Him*." "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature."

And this thought of our union in Christ as the means of our Redemption is abundantly illustrated by the use of the word blood in the Holy Scriptures.

“The blood,” says Bishop Westcott, “is the seat of life in such a sense that it can be spoken of directly as the life itself (Gen. ix. 4, Deut. xii. 23). More exactly the life is said to be in the blood (Lev. xvii. 17). Hence it was forbidden to eat flesh with the blood (Gen. ix. 4, Lev. iii. 26, xvii. 11, Deut. xii. 23). Two distinct ideas were included in the sacrifice of a victim, the death of the victim by the shedding of its blood, and the liberation, so to speak, of the principle of life by which it had been animated, so that this life became available for another end.”

“Thus in accordance with the typical teaching of the Levitical ordinances the Blood of Christ represents Christ’s Life (1) as rendered in free self-sacrifice to God for men, and (2) as brought into perfect fellowship with God, having been set free by death.”

“The Blood of Christ is, in short, the Life of Christ given for men, and as applied, the Life of Christ now given to men.”

“By sprinkling of Christ’s Blood the believer is first brought into fellowship with God in

Christ, and in the imperfect conduct of his personal life the Life of Christ is continually communicated to him for growth and cleansing " (Westcott's *Epistle of St. John*, Notes, pp. 34, 35, 36). "Moses took the blood and sprinkled it on the people" (Ex. xxiv. 8). "The blood of the Covenant, the power of a new life made available for the people of God, enabled men to hold communion with God" (Westcott, *Hebrews*, p. 287).

"Just as the blood of the appointed victims was efficacious by Divine promise for the representation of the people, the Blood of Christ in its essential nature is efficacious for those to whom it is applied. *In the Blood of Jesus*—not simply through it—we have boldness to enter into the Holy Place (Heb. x. 19)" (Westcott, *Hebrews*, p. 294). And if we add to the profound significance of this use of Blood in Holy Scripture the symbolism of the imposition of hands, by which the offerer associated himself in the sacrifice with the victim offered, we have the clearest indication of the union of the believer in Christ, and the most complete refutation of the notion that the work of Christ for us can ever be separated from His work in us.

The Blood is the Life, and in His Life, now

for ever presented in Heaven, and bestowed on earth, we share alike in the merit of His Cross and in the benefit of His death. Justification, which places us in the right relation towards God, cannot be considered apart from sanctification, which enables us to live rightly in God. We do not rest complacently upon the fact of a death in which we have no share; we become united to a life in which alone we obtain the innumerable benefits which that death has procured for us.

Nothing could be further from the truth than the familiar illustration of the school-master who receives the punishment which the boy deserves, for in Christ we do pay the penalty of sin, and the deeper our growth in holiness, the keener becomes the sorrow for the deeds that have wounded His love and dishonoured His Name.

Justification and sanctification, pardon and life, atonement and grace, are not separate facts; they are part of the process of salvation by which man is reconciled to God in Christ.

And, once more, human life supplies an illustration from human personality. Is it not true in human affairs that mere forgiveness, in which we have no share and of which we have no practical knowledge, is of little or

no value to us? And is it not equally true that human forgiveness expressed and accepted does convey life and joy to the heart of the offender? It is not a mere utterance, a formal pronouncement; it is the reunion of two persons, the renewal of love, the restoration of friendship, the sacramental touch by which the grace of pardon becomes life and peace in the heart of the friend who receives it. The smile of a child forgiven by his mother, the joy of a husband whose wife in the tenderness of a noble heart overlooks the past and forgets the chastening of her own soul in the service of his, are tokens of the power of forgiveness to convey new life to the heart and will of men. Pardon is life-giving. And thus the soul that has been justified by Christ is also sanctified in Christ. And the cry of the redeemed is the shout of them that triumph, the song of those that feast, it is the *Te Deum* of the soul for whom life is service, and death the gate into a world of duty. The awakened soul is ashamed for its sin and yet alive unto God, the rain of tears has fallen upon the face that is shining with the light of love, and the heart that Christ has pardoned scorns delights and only longs to live laborious days, if thereby it may prove its love and be a witness to

its joy. Pardon and life are for ever united in the pardoned soul. The vision of love is the inspiration of work.

It is not the awakened soul that despises the sacraments of grace or shirks the toil of the kingdom ; the life of sanctification is the logical issue of justification, they flow from one Divine Personality Who is ever stooping to give life through His Blood to sin-stained and penitent souls.

“ A man of sorrows, of toil and tears,
An outcast man and a lonely,
And He looked on me, and throughout the
years
Him must I serve, Him only.”

So Christ moves down the world, and, as of old in Galilee, He calls out from the crowd the souls that have been waiting for Him ; He transforms the peasant into the martyr, the sinner into the saint, the profligate into the penitent ; and the bestowal of His pardon becomes the renewal of their life for time and for eternity.

“ Friendship—that is, the quality, the meaning of our religion, and all our Church system, and all our elaboration of services, all our sacramental life, the grace of Holy Baptism, the beauty of the Eucharist, the tenderness of penitence, the courage of Confirmation, and the joy and strength of priestly office, are but so many symbols of this one fact, so many facets ‘ of the diamond heart unstained and clear, the whole world’s crowning jewel,’ the friendship between man and God.”

(DR. FIGGIS, Sermon in *The Guardian*,
p. 799, May 19, 1909.)

CHAPTER VII

THE ATONEMENT IN THE CHURCH—THE PLEADING OF THE SACRIFICE

THE question that still remains for us to consider is how the work of reconciliation which commenced but did not end at Calvary is still being carried on by Christ. If we are saved by His life, and sanctification is the issue of pardon and atonement, then where is this work being done, and what are the means which God employs for its accomplishment?

Now, no unbiassed student of the New Testament can fail to have observed that the whole stress of the Apostolic teaching is laid upon the Resurrection, and that the salvation which Christ has procured for us at Calvary is bestowed upon us in His Risen Life. And the whole meaning of Ascension and Pentecost lies in the fact that Christ is still present with and in His Church, so that in union with Him the Church is fulfilling His work, the extension of

the Incarnation, the channel of that love to man which has borne fallen humanity to the throne of God in Heaven, and pleads before Him the merits of His Passion and His Death. There is a vision of Heaven in the book of Revelation in which the Apostle sees in the midst "*a Lamb as it had been slain.*" Christ is still pleading not by any special deed or word, but by His own Presence, the one complete and all-sufficient sacrifice which He has offered for the sins of the world.

As I have said, the blood of the Old Testament sacrifice was presented before God in the holy place, and the blood is the life. So the Perfect Life crucified and yet risen, slain and yet triumphant, is offered perpetually in Heaven. It is the *Lamb as it had been slain* Whose pierced Hands and wounded Feet are a perpetual offering at the Throne of Grace for the sin of the world. The sacrifice is complete, but its visible expression and its commemoration are for ever revealed in the Person of the Saviour, Who, in His human nature risen and ascended, bears the marks of His Passion and pleads the merits of His Cross.

Now, what Christ is, the Church must also be.

In the Epistle to the Ephesians St. Paul uses a startling expression concerning the

life of Christ in the Church on earth: "The fulness of Him *Who is being fulfilled* all in all" (Eph. i. 23, R.V.).

"The Church is that through which Christ lives on and works on here below on earth. Jesus the Christ Incarnate is no longer on earth as He was. His feet and hands no longer move and work in our midst, as once they moved and worked in Palestine. But St. Paul affirms that He is not without feet and hands on earth; the Church is His Body. Through the Church, which St. Paul refuses to think of as something separate from Him, He still lives and moves among men" (Armitage Robinson, *Epistle to the Ephesians*, Commentary, p. 43).

And in the Epistle to the Colossians St. Paul goes a step further. He even declares that the Church is "destined to complete His sufferings" (Robinson, *ad loc.*). "I rejoice in my sufferings on your behalf, and fill up in your stead the remainder of the sufferings of Christ in my flesh on behalf of His Body which is the Church" (Col. i. 24).

The work of Christ finished on the Cross! Why, it is being continued perpetually in the life of His Church. Christ still suffers. In some mysterious sense He moves on to the

completion of His suffering in His Church on earth. And in Him the Church pleads the sacrifice of Calvary, and exhibits and reveals it in her life.

The Eucharist is the Church's great act of worship in which she proclaims the Lord's death till He come. As in Heaven He stands before God, the Lamb as it had been slain, so on earth in union with the Great High Priest the Church exercises her priestly function when she offers the Eucharistic Sacrifice, and pleads for all the world at the altar of God the same sacrifice which our Lord is pleading in Heaven.

“ Once, only once, and once for all,
His precious life He gave ;
Before the Cross our spirits fall,
And own it strong to save.

“ ‘ One offering, single and complete,’
With lips and heart we say ;
But what He never can repeat
He shows forth day by day.

“ His Manhood pleads where now it lives
On heaven's eternal throne,
And where in mystic rite He gives
Its Presence to His own.”

“The heavenly offering and the earthly pleading are alike one with the Sacrifice of the Cross. It is in each case the same sacrifice which is pleaded, but at a different stage of its completion.”

(Randolph, *The Precious Blood of Christ*,” pp. 55, 56.)

And if she pleads for man with God, she pleads for God with man. The print of the nails in the daily life of the Church is the proof to the world that God has sent His Son, it is the token of love by which the Church in her life is to reveal Christ to men and reconcile them with God.

Still in the name of her Master she bids all who doubt the reality of her divine life see in the marks of His Passion the proof alike of His Cross and of His Resurrection. “Reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side : and be not faithless, but believing.”

Thus in worship and in life Christ is ever pleading in His Church, and His Church is ever pleading in Him His atoning work upon the Cross.

And the life of the Church on earth becomes therefore the life of a living Personality, in Whom and by Whom the world is being reconciled and atonement made.

Alas if the Church has no wounds to show, if she has so far forgotten the Cross that it has ceased to be more than a mere symbol, a subject for graceful thought and poetic emotions, a topic that moves to tears but does not inspire the life of the missionary or the death of the martyr, if it is but an emblem placed upon her buildings and engraved upon her books of devotion, so that men seek in vain for the print of the nails and for the mark of the spear in the life and character of her priests!

Alas that too often in history she has come down from the Cross at the bidding of the crowd, and surrendered alike her proof of love and her power to mould and fashion the hearts of men!

Like her Master, it is when she is lifted up she draws all men unto her; and the noblest and bravest days of her life have been the days when, despised and persecuted by men, she has revealed the Passion of her Lord. Then indeed the world has acknowledged that Christ was a living power in the Divine Society which He created and made, for then indeed has she striven to fill up the measure of His sufferings and to complete the Sacrifice of His Cross.

It is thus that she intercedes with men for God. It is her glorious privilege to plead for

man to God in each act of Eucharistic worship ; it is her joy and honour to plead for God to man in each hour of suffering and by each pang of martyrdom.

And alike in worship and in life, it is Christ and His Cross Whom she pleads and proclaims ; it is the one atoning work that she is ever showing forth to God for man, and from God to man, till the day breaks and the shadows flee away.

“God would mould His penitents that they may combine sorrow with joy, that they may hear at once a sigh in the depths of their souls and a music far away. There must be in the renewed nature something of the iron that has been moulded in His furnace, and something of the rose which has been expanded in His sunshine.”

(ARCHBISHOP ALEXANDER, *The Great Question*, 93.)

“Tears that sweeter far
Than the world’s mad laughter are.”

(ARCHBISHOP TRENCH.)

CHAPTER VIII

THE ATONEMENT IN THE CHURCH—THE BESTOWAL OF PARDON

THE Sacrifice of the Holy Eucharist is not complete until we share its benefits, and thus become worthy to offer ourselves as a willing sacrifice holy and acceptable unto God. Just as Christ's work for us cannot be separated from His work in us, so the Sacrifice of the Altar is not complete until we unite ourselves to Christ by the reception of Christ's Body and Blood, and there offer ourselves a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God. It is the sacrifice of us in Christ which completes the great sacrificial act by which we first plead the Death of Christ, and then share in His Life.

The peace-offering is the type and shadow of the Sacrifice of Christ and of the Christian feast in which the "innumerable benefits" of "His precious blood shedding" are bestowed upon us.

The victim was slain, the blood was sprinkled

before God, and part of the victim was restored to the worshipper and his friends, to be consumed by them. "All these different movements," says Canon Randolph, "together made up the one act of sacrifice." And in the Holy Eucharist we "plead the merits of His Passion and feed sacramentally on His Body and Blood" (Randolph, *The Precious Blood of Christ*, pp. 56, 57).

Christ's death is not pleaded instead of us, but on our behalf, in order that by communion we may in union with Him draw near to the Father and present our bodies a living sacrifice unto Him. Once more it is not substitution, but union, that is the keynote of our Eucharist, as it is the true meaning and basis of the theology of the Atonement. And in the Communion Office in our Prayer Book we approach God through Christ. The priest in the name and on behalf of the people pleads at the Altar in the Consecration Prayer the merits of the Cross; then by the reception of the Blessed Sacrament "our sinful bodies are made clean by His Body," we unite ourselves to Christ, and in Him we approach the Father.

The Blessed Sacrament is the means whereby Christ works in us and we in Him. It is part of that process of salvation by which all that

Christ has done for us becomes effective in us. Justification and sanctification are as inseparable in Communion as in Absolution.

The Victim offered by the Church becomes the Victim bestowed upon the Church, and when our sinful bodies are made clean by His Body, and our souls are washed in His most precious Blood, we do in fact dwell in Him and He in us.

And thus the Church becomes the Home in which Christ applies to each soul the benefits of His Cross.

In the Sacrament of Holy Baptism (by which we are united to Christ), in Holy Communion (by which we are sustained in Christ), in Absolution (in which we are cleansed by Christ), it is a living Person Who by His sacramental power carries on the work of reconciliation in the life of the soul.

Personality is sacramental. In human life each living person is a sacrament; they are the channels of life and grace; their voice a sermon, their glance a revelation; or they may be a savour of death unto death.

But the power of personality to invade our life, to dominate our spirit, and to control our actions, is a common fact of human experience.

Is it wonderful, then, that the Living Person

of our Blessed Redeemer should condescend to touch us with His Power and fill us with His Presence in and through those material means which He has for ever consecrated to be the channels of grace and life ?

We are so unsacramental that we forget that life is one vast sacrament : the grip of the hand in friendship, the kiss of pure and holy love, the voices of nature and the triumphs of art, are sacraments of love and beauty ; and in the Sacraments of the Church the sacraments of life are purified and hallowed to be the means by which the Author and Giver of all sacraments shall enter into the soul and dwell there for ever.

And as souls grow like each other even in face and feature in the intimacy of love, so by the mysterious union of Christ with the members of His Church we shall one day awake after His likeness, and shall be satisfied with it.

But lest we should doubt concerning our forgiveness, Christ has instituted in His Church one special Sacrament of love and penance by which we may be assured of pardon, and renew our life. The Church, as we have already seen, is " God's priest in the world and for the world " (Moberly, *Ministerial Priesthood*, p. 256).

And to her, our Lord has entrusted the ministry of reconciliation.

If to human hands He has committed His sacred Body to be the life of the faithful, it is at least in accordance with His Divine plan and custom that He should entrust to a specially appointed ministry the work of bestowing His forgiveness upon penitent souls.

"Look where we will," says Dr. Liddon, "in human life, we must recognise this great fact in God's providential government of the world. He does make large masses of men dependent upon the good dispositions as well as on the capacity of others. . . . He dispenses His gifts to us, not immediately, but through the agency of our fellow-creatures" ("Sermon on Sacerdotalism," Sermon X., *University Sermons*, second series, p. 197).

And the principle of the priesthood of the ministry is the principle of the body and the members. It is a life of mutual dependence and service, in which the "foot cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee"; each member is necessary, each has its own special and peculiar function to be performed, not instead of, but on behalf of, all the other members of the body. So that the priestliness of the Church belongs to the whole body, and yet there are certain

priestly functions which some members of the body are specially appointed to fulfil for the welfare of the whole.

The priesthood of the ministry is exercised in union with the whole body of faithful laity, in their name and for their sake, not apart from or instead of them, and yet Divinely appointed and authorised.

“ They are priests because they are personally consecrated to be the representatives and active organs of the priesthood of the Church ” (Moberly, *Ministerial Priesthood*, p. 259).

And to them God has committed the ministry of reconciliation. They are the necessary organs of the body, by which the blessings of forgiveness are bestowed upon the Church, and the work of reconciliation is carried out within the Church.

As in the Holy Eucharist the hand of the priest is the means whereby the Body of the Lord is given to the faithful, so in the Sacrament of Penance the voice of the priest is the means whereby God bestows His forgiveness upon penitent souls.

The ministry of reconciliation ! It is the experience of all human life, consecrated and hallowed for the spiritual welfare of the Church ;

it is personality illumined and inspired by God the Holy Ghost for the service of man.¹

And the commission of the Upper Room (John xx. 22, 23), the direction of one Apostle (Jas. v. 16) and the claim of another (2 Cor. ii. 10), are being confirmed and fulfilled in that Church where twice daily we declare that God "hath given power and commandment to His ministers, to declare and pronounce to His people, being penitent, the absolution and remission of their sins," where the sick are urged to make a special confession of their sins, and where all who cannot quiet their conscience or are troubled by scruple and doubtfulness are urged to open their grief to the minister of God and receive the benefit of absolution.

But in fact the work of reconciliation in the Sacrament of Penance lies in a region beyond the need of argument or authority ; its witness is found in the need and appeal of human souls. "'Tis we musicians know !" And those who have laid bare the secrets of their heart in the darkest hours of life are the best exponents of the power and grace of Confession.

It is the penitent, who with stammering lips

¹ See Appendix B, "The Redemptive Power of Personality," pp. 111 ff.

and trembling tongue has knelt before the emblem of His Passion and poured out his soul, who has the right to speak, and when he says, "Whereas I was blind, now I see," we know that we have testimony which no arguments can shake. The voice of penitence in the sanctuary of love, the witness of human personality to the might of human agency in the Church of God ; and the record of saintly lives that owe their saintliness to the Sacrament of Penitence and Peace ; the story of human hearts that have climbed in fear and yet in faith these altar stairs that slope through darkness up to God ; are all that we need to convince us that they who seek to uproot this grace from the life of the Church are fighting against Him.

And still from age to age this ministry of reconciliation shall be the plank after shipwreck, the hope of the despised and forsaken, the light of the fallen and the outcast ; and the highest reward of God's priests, when they stand before Him to give an account of their stewardship, will be the souls which in His gracious condescension He has allowed them to lead by penitence and prayer within the sanctuary of His Presence in the peace of His redeeming love.

“The Cross of Christ is more to us than all His miracles.”

(ELEANOR HAMILTON KING, *The Disciples*.)

CHAPTER IX

THE CROSS THE INSPIRATION OF DAILY LIFE

SUFFERING is the mystery of life. "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together"; and penitent and impenitent, righteous and unrighteous, rich and poor, high and low, bear a common burden and share in a common sorrow.

In the midst of the world's laughter stand the world's crosses, grim and silent; and the mystery of pain is still the shadow that falls across the feast of life, and spoils the peace of the guests.

Is there no message from Calvary, no light from the Cross of the Crucified that shall illumine the dark road of suffering, and make it tolerable for the tired and wounded feet of sin-laden humanity?

It is not the cry of the agnostic or the cynic alone: it is the piteous appeal of Christian hearts, the unspoken question of many a parish priest as he stands in the presence of pain

by the bedside of some innocent sufferer, whose agony it is torture even to see, and whose dumb and patient suffering is a mute appeal to justice and pity. "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" Is the Gospel of His Fatherhood mocked by the misery of life? For—

"God's possible is taught by His world's loving,
And the children doubt of each."

(Elizabeth Barrett Browning.)

And the pain seems to fall on those who least deserve it: it is so often the saints who suffer, the innocent who bear far more than their share of the burden and weight of the world. While "the ungodly flourish like a green bay-tree," the deep sighing of the poor is apparently unheard and unheeded by the Man of Sorrows "Who for our sake became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich."

What does it mean? Can Passiontide supply the answer? Is there a word from the Cross that shall reconcile for us the justice and the love of the Father with all the injustice and misery of the world which He has made?

And the answer is found and the word is

spoken at Calvary. Christianity does not explain, nor is it intended to explain, the mystery and injustice of pain ; but it reveals upon the Cross perfect innocence combined with perfect suffering, and thus one thing becomes clear : Love works out its purpose and its plan in pain. It may not be just that the innocent should suffer for the guilty , it may not be right that pain should exist ; but God, at least, has submitted to His own law. He has borne the burden of suffering that, in it and through it, He may redeem the world which He loves. And the Cross reveals the fact that love must be fulfilled in pain ; that God, Who is love, is not exempt from the common burden of His people ; and that, hidden in the secrets of Divine Providence, there does seem to be a law that love and suffering shall be united, and the redemption of the world shall be wrought out by those who suffer, in the might and by the power of love.

That is the revelation of the Cross ; and to that the human heart bears witness from one generation to another. The deeper the love, the greater the suffering. There is not a mother who yearns over her son who does not know it ; there is not a father whose grey hairs are stricken to the grave by the

shame of his child who has not discovered it. And if our poor human heart suffers in proportion to the depth of its love, shall God bear less than His creatures? Our own heart whispers the secret of infinite love.

“ Would I fain in my impotent yearning do all
for this man,
And dare doubt He alone shall not help him,
Who yet alone can ? ”

(Browning.)

So we climb through the knowledge of our own heart to the love of the Sacred Heart ; and as we see the Lord submitting to His own law, we begin dimly to perceive that while He will not—nay, cannot—destroy pain, He will use it for His own ends ; He will find a way in it, and through it, to redeem the world, and for the joy set before Him He will endure it, even unto death.

Thus Passiontide reveals to us not only that love must suffer, but also that in and through the pain He is able to succour those who suffer. He can help because He knows—

“ Love’s strength standeth in love’s sacrifice,
And whoso suffers most hath most to give.”
(Eleanor Hamilton King.)

“Thou art worthy”—so runs the triumph song of heaven—“to open the book, and to unloose the seals, *because Thou wast slain.*” Down in the dark valley He has learned the secret, He Who was made perfect through suffering. And so, in trouble, we go to those who have borne the burdens of life; we do not cry to the butterflies of fashion that skim through the air, the social will-o’-the-wisps, the pleasure-seekers and fortune-hunters, but to those who in dark hours have drained the cup of suffering to the dregs. They, and they alone, can open the book of our life and unloose its seals, they alone can explain the mystery of our pain and reveal the light that lies behind, because they, like Simon, have borne the cross by the side of Christ, and have walked to Calvary with Him.

CONCLUSION

WE have tried to consider the Atonement in the light of Personality. We have seen that Christianity is a revelation of Persons, that in the region of personal love much that is hard to be understood in theology becomes at least acceptable, and that to those who have a sense of sin, and yet understand the difficulty of forgiveness, "the Cross of Christ is more than all His miracles," and that the Church is the home in which a Living Redeemer still saves and heals the penitent soul by the bestowal of a pardon which has been won for him, but which must be apprehended by him. And underneath each aspect of doctrine, in the teaching of the Church, in all organisations, and within each Sacrament, there lies the redemptive power of Personality. So that we have not been considering a barren dogma or a lifeless institution, but we have been kneeling before a Living Person, on Whose Breast we may lean at the Holy Supper, and Whose Voice we may hear in the utterances

of His Church, so that of all faith and practice and of all worship and life we may say—

“ Christ is the end,
For Christ is the beginning.
Christ is the beginning,
For the end is Christ.”

(Myers.)

And life shall be ever the reflection of His Beauty and the channel of His Presence. The sunset on the purple mountains, the sunrise on the snow-clad heights, the stillness of the quiet valley and the glory of the silver sea ; the love of friends, the tenderness of wife and sister, of father and of mother, the ministry of faithful priests, the smile of a little child, the courage of the strong and the patience of the weak, are rays of light that fall from the Sun of Righteousness and guide us to the deeper knowledge of Him Whom not having seen we love.

APPENDICES

“ When we think we hear the Voice of God, we hear only the beating of our human heart.”

(BLATCHFORD.)

“ The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit.”

(ST. PAUL.)

APPENDIX A¹

THE CHRISTIAN CONSCIOUSNESS AND SENSE OF SIN

“When we think we hear the Voice of God, we hear only the beating of our human heart.”

THAT is the message of *The Clarion*, the last word of modern atheism. It is indeed a comfortable gospel for the weary and heavy laden ; it must be a source of wonderful peace and happiness to the victims of lust and cruelty, to the failures of life, to the weakest who go to the wall !

We might call attention to the tremendous assumption that underlies such a statement ; to the arrogance that assumes a knowledge of human thought and feeling, coupled with an omniscience that vaunts itself amidst the problems of the unseen world.

But it is not with its comfort, but with its unreason, that we would wish to deal. And we prefer to take the statement as it stands, and ask, in all seriousness, if the testi-

¹ Reprinted by kind permission of the Editor of *The Church Monthly*.

mony of the Christian conscience for twenty centuries can be reasonably dismissed in one sentence. At least so earnest a believer in science as Mr. Blatchford should be scientific in his methods of argument, and it is wholly unscientific to refuse to regard psychical phenomena—the mental thought, intuitions, and sensations of men—as unworthy of consideration.

The spiritual expert has as much right to be heard as the expert in any other department of knowledge. It is unreasonable, and it is certainly unscientific, to shut off the spiritual elements of man's nature into a watertight compartment and label them alone as impossible and absurd. For the nature of man is complex, and his mind and his spiritual faculties cannot be separated. It is like trying to cut the atmosphere with a knife. The attempt, moreover, is dangerous, for if human faculties are to be hopelessly discredited when they deal with the gravest as well as the most spiritual aspects of life, suspicion is inevitably thrown upon them when they are exercised in other regions of thought and feeling.

And is it really conceivable that the highest type of character which the world has ever seen is produced by hallucination or dyspepsia ; that some of the noblest thoughts and bravest deeds in history are merely the outcome of a diseased imagination or the product of a pious fancy ? We have surely a right to say

that the grace and beauty of the lives of saints are facts which, like any other facts, must be carefully and dispassionately examined, and it is as unscientific to assign inefficient causes to spiritual phenomena as it is to proclaim inadequate reasons for physical facts. We are justified in asking that the marks of the spiritual life shall be reasonably interpreted ; and to dismiss the testimony of holy and saintly men as the vain fancies of overwrought brains and unrestrained sentiment is simply to be unscientific, to be guilty of an insult to intelligence, and an outrage upon the heart of humanity.

For what after all are the facts ? The lives of Christians are open to inspection, and the secret of the highest type of Christian character has throughout the ages been proclaimed in one sentence—"Whom having not seen we love." That utterance requires a more reasonable explanation than the dream of fanatics, who are "deceived by the beating of their own heart."

And if that is the only explanation that *The Clarion* can give us of lives based upon the consciousness of God, then we Christians are justified in keeping our own view of the source of Christian character, until science and Mr. Blatchford can offer a more adequate interpretation of the facts of spiritual life.

Meanwhile, we venture to commend to those who still shrink from accepting his conclusions

the following weighty and thoughtful words, written by a devout Christian, a spiritual expert, whose profound learning and piety establish at any rate some claim to reasonable consideration.

"What," he asks, "is the evidence of the reality of religious experience? Commonsense and scientific criticism and medical pathology may freely probe its eccentricities to the limit of their will. But there remains an immense and unexplained residuum of the best and noblest of our race—men and women who, in every age and in every rank and station, and endowed with every degree and kind of intellectual capacity, have lived the lives of saints and heroes, or died the death of martyrs, and furthered by their action and passion, and, as they trusted, by their prayers, the material, moral, social, spiritual welfare of mankind, solely in reliance on their personal intercourse with God. Materialism is obliged to explain their experience away as a reflex action misinterpreted, or other form of hallucination, with the awkward result of having to attribute the finest types of human character, as well as the greatest factor in the progress of the world, to the direct action of mental disease" (Illingworth, *Personality, Human and Divine*, p. 132).

The question before us is nothing more nor less than this: Is the whole testimony of centuries of religious experience to be dismissed

by one contemptuous phrase into the limbo of antiquated superstitions and pious fancies ?

A Psalmist cries, " Whom have I in Heaven but Thee ? and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of Thee." An Apostle declares that he " counts all things but dross if he may win Christ." Augustine, converted by his mother's prayers, says, " The heart has no rest till it finds its rest in 'Thee.'" Chrysostom converts a city by the spell of his spiritual convictions. Loyola forsakes the warfare of the world for the armies of the Church. Luther stands before kings and emperors for the triumph of truth. The subtle intellect of Bishop Butler finds upon his deathbed the simple message of the pardon of Christ sufficient for his need. The cultured professor, Romanes, trained in the school of scientific criticism and critical analysis, confesses that when for awhile he lost his faith, the universe for him lost the soul of loveliness. Kingsley looks up into the unseen and cries in his last hour, " How beautiful God is ! " Damien dies for the lepers whom he strove to save. And the humblest Christian toiler goes forth to his work and to his labour, with the Name which is above every name upon his lips, content to live, if he may live with Christ, to die, if he may die at His Feet. And all this testimony, upon which the edifice of character has been built throughout the centuries, is to be scorned as a delusion, which, if it be a delusion, is

the greatest marvel the world has known, for it is nothing less than the creation of the finest type of character by fraud and self-deception. If that, we repeat, is the only explanation that modern criticism can give of the character which Christianity creates, then it is easier to accept the testimony of the saints than to believe in the judgment of the critics.

And what, further, of the future? The thought of death, sooner or later, comes to all men. What comfort does Mr. Blatchford give us here?

We learn that, as we stand upon the threshold of the world beyond, the thoughts which have sustained the saints in their last hour, and the inspirations which have helped them to "greet the unseen with a cheer," are merely the feeble pulsations of a heart that soon ceases to beat—for ever; the faint echo of a life-long mockery, ere the curtain falls upon a scene of disordered dreams and pious fancies, that have lighted with a false and flickering glare the brief span of human existence.

Assuredly we must have better evidence than this before we surrender to modern critics "the faith once for all delivered to the saints."

But there remains one question still, to which Mr. Blatchford has given us no answer.

If it be true that the Voice of God is a delusion, that the noblest thoughts and the highest

aspirations of humanity are the product of a diseased imagination, there is still the sense of sin, the voice of what we Christians call conscience, the uneasy consciousness of moral imperfection.

What is this ? and whence does it come ?

It is no fancy ; it is not a pious dream, or an hysterical idea ; it is a fact, a painful and insistent reality, to which men bear witness every day of their life.

They do wrong and they suffer ; they are ashamed of themselves. Why this sense of shame ? and whence does it come ?

For man, after all, is a rational being ; at least, Mr. Blatchford and his friends are the first to tell us so. He is not the creature of imagination, frightened like a child by ghosts of his own fancy in the darkness of his ignorance. He is a man, endowed with reason and intellect, and he is not likely to be pursued for a lifetime by the pangs of a remorse or the misery of a self-reproach which are merely the result of pious fancies or a nervous temperament.

If, then, this sense of sin be something more than the beating of his own heart, and Mr. Blatchford can offer us no more adequate explanation than that, would it not be worth while to consider whether the Christian explanation has not some reasonable basis ?

We Christians say that the sense of sin is the witness of God ; that the pangs of remorse are the human tokens of a Divine power, which

makes itself felt when wrong has been done and guilt has been incurred ; that it is felt and known, often where no eye can see and no ear can hear ; not in the noonday sun, when the fierce light of public opinion beats upon the soul, but in the cool of the day, when the Lord God walks in the garden of the soul, to be the avenger of wrong and the punisher of sin. When there is no voice, nor any to answer, men hide themselves from fear, which, if there be no God, is as irrational as it is absurd.

And we are puzzled, moreover, in a world which is stamped and characterised by design, to see so great a factor in life as the shame of a stricken heart without plan or purpose ; the aimless sting of a foe that all men fear and no men know ; the envenomed dart of a wandering caprice ; the instrument of a power at once unknown and unknowable, as pitiless as it is incomprehensible, as unjust as it is inscrutable and fickle.

At least, let us weigh well the Christian explanation of this sense of shame before we reject it for a theory which, after all, leaves us in chaos, the victims of a blind force, and the sport of an unreasoning power, and which ascribes the pain of the human spirit throughout the ages to the beating of the human heart.

We, too, have our explanation, and it is the explanation of the saints ; we, too, have our theories of the universe and of the soul :

they have weathered the storms of two thousand years ; they have witnessed countless struggles for faith and freedom ; they have passed through the fires of persecution ; they have trembled beneath the judgments of the great and the scorn of the terrible. But they have survived, as Truth, in the Providence of God, will ever survive the weapons that are fashioned against it ; for it rests upon no human decree, but upon the faith of that Church of which One Eternal Living Voice has for ever proclaimed that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

“ If we impinge, never so lightly, on the life of a fellow-mortal, the touch of our personality, like the ripple of a stone cast into a pond, widens and widens, in unending circles, till the far-off gods themselves cannot tell when action ceases.”

(KIPLING.)

APPENDIX B

THE REDEMPTIVE POWER OF PERSONALITY

If the Atonement of our Blessed Lord becomes in any degree intelligible in the light of human personality, then surely we may claim that the revelations of modern science and psychology are most significant for us.

The amazing influence which human beings exercise over each other, the mysterious forces which mind and will can set in motion; above all, the capacity which one human life possesses to mould and transform another, bear witness to the redemptive power of personality. And if mind and will and the love of the human heart have influence beyond our ken, is it wonderful that the redemption of the world should be the work of one Divine Personality in Whom we live and move and have our being? and is it not conceivable and, above all, reasonable that He should choose and ordain a special ministry of human aid and love to be the channel through which He still stoops to raise fallen nature to the throne of God? The ministry of reconciliation is the ministry of human life consecrated by the Son of Man for the healing and the help

of men. It is the old force and power of human influence raised into the sphere of Divine redemption and dedicated to the service of God for ever. It is the redemptive power of personality inspired by the Spirit of God for the salvation of human souls.

And just as Christ is calling upon His Church to use once more the long-neglected ministry of healing, and thus rescue a gift of God from promiscuous and unauthorised use, so He has bidden His own appointed ministers to satisfy the craving of the heart to open its grief, by the Sacrament of Penance, and thus guide into wise and lawful channels the stream of human weakness and infirmity.

In the pages of monthly periodicals, in the self-constituted confessionals of the class-meeting and the religious revival, and in all the pitiful efforts of men and women to get rid of the burden of conscience in strange and unlawful ways, we see the desire which God has implanted in our heart to lay hold of human love in the struggle of life. It is part of His plan of governing the world that we should "every one of us depend upon the ability, the conscientiousness, the will of others, for the greater part of the blessings which we enjoy" (Liddon, *Sermon X., University Sermons*, "Sacerdotalism"). And we see it fulfilled in the highest and truest sphere in the ministry of the Christian Church.

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